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# VARIOUS.

## Improved method of laying down flooring.

A new method of laying down floors has been adopted in France, and is said to have obtained a wide application. It consists in putting down flooring, not, as hitherto, on joists, but in embedding the boarding in asphalte. The new floors are used mostly for ground storeys of barracks and hospitals, as well as churches and courts of law. Pieces of oak, usually 2½ in. to 4 in. broad, 12 in. to 30 in. long, and 1 in. thick, are pressed down into a layer of hot asphalte not quite ½ in. thick in the well-known herring-bone pattern. To ensure a complete adhesion of the wood to the asphalte, and to obtain the smallest possible joints, the edges of the pieces of wood are planed down, bevelling toward the bottom, so that their cross section becomes wedge-like. Nails, of course, are not necessary, and a perfectly level surface may be given to the flooring by planing after the laying down. The advantages of this flooring, which only requires an even bed on which to rest, are said to be the following:—

- 1.—Damp from below, and its consequence, rot, are prevented.
- 2.—Floors may be cleaned quickly and with the least amount of water, ensuring rapid drying.
- 3.—Vermin cannot accumulate in the joints.
- 4.—Unhealthy exhalations from the soil cannot penetrate into living rooms. Asphalte being impermeable to damp, rooms become perfectly healthy, even if they are not vaulted underneath. In buildings with several storeys, as in hospitals, the vitiated air of the lower rooms cannot ascend, an object which it has hitherto not been possible to attain by any other means.
- 5.—The layer of asphalte will also prevent the spreading of fire from one floor to another in case of conflagration.

*The Furniture Gazette.*

## Wall Decoration.

Efforts have for some time past been made, writes the London correspondent of the *Art Interchange*, to improve the designs of wall-papers, in accordance with the rule that wall-decoration should be in low or tertiary tones of colour, and that the design should be flat, and not shaded in relief. An experiment has lately been made of producing wall-papers in sheets measuring about 3 ft. by 2 ft. It is stated that this plan produces a better effect when the whole wall is finished, than when the paper is laid on in long sheets, as formerly. There is certainly an amount of variety in the tone of the different blocks of paper, which gives rather the effect of a handpainted wall than the mechanical accuracy of ordinary paper-hanging; but it would seem doubtful whether the increased labour required to piece the blocks carefully will not seriously interfere with the general adoption of this plan, even if the advantages which it is supposed to secure are actual ones. It is affirmed that the printing of the designs can be made more artistic by this means, and that greater freedom of treatment is possible as to colouring. Painted walls, however, with the designs stencilled on and afterwards worked up by hand, seem more in favour than paper, at the present time, and are certainly much more durable and cleanly, since they can be washed without injury.

Beautiful designs have been brought out in muralis, both for the coverings of the wall itself and for the dados or wainscoting, and excellent effects are produced by colouring the background with flat tints, and leaving the design in relief, or the designs may be worked up to a very high state of finish by hand-colouring.

Somewhat the same effect may be produced by papering the walls with a good flock paper, and afterwards painting over the whole with a broad flat colour. We have seen several rooms decorated in this way, the effect of which was admirable; the raised design coming out in darker tints than the background.

Another very satisfactory form of wall decoration is the "gerso" work, a revival of an old Italian industry. It is chiefly suitable, however, for panels of cabinets or sideboards, for narrow borderings for dados, pilasters, or in any place where

no large space has to be covered. It is a kind of paste which is modelled on to wood panelling in relief, and the design is then painted in any way that is desired, and the whole finished off with a coating of thin varnish. A very good effect is produced by working a design in "gerso" on stained green wood and colouring it in bronze gold. We have also seen some beautiful little panels, of a dull red ground, with a design of the leaves of the Virginia creeper with its richest autumn colouring. If the design and colouring be good, it is difficult to imagine any better or more artistic mode of decorating panels than this.

For more expensive kinds of decoration, embossed leather is still high in favour. Many of the old Spanish designs have been copied and reproduced in their original colouring in this way. There is an imitation of leather, made of a coarse kind of papier-mâché, which is very accurate, and cannot be distinguished from the real embossed leather except by close inspection. It is claimed as an advantage for this manufacture that it has not the close, stuffy smell which seems to cling about the leather panels, and which sometimes makes a room disagreeable.

Japanese papers still continue to be used largely for all sorts of purposes, and are very satisfactory, both as to wear and to general effect.

Silk damasks, and various forms of woven tapestry, are used for wall hangings, and are undoubtedly far the most beautiful where expense is not an object. The Duke of Westminster has one room entirely hung with embroidered panels of thick fawn-coloured silk. The cost of such a wall-hanging would preclude most people from indulging in such luxury; but there is no doubt that, like most good things, these panels will be cheap in the long-run, for they will simply last for ever, and will always be beautiful. Pretty hangings for the walls of a room were lately made of Etruscan red silk, with a small pattern in damask on it. Portions of the design were picked out with fine Japanese gold by hand, and the effect was excellent.

*The Furniture Gazette.*

## Suggestions on furniture finishing.

There is scarcely anything more beautiful than the variegated colours and grains of many varieties of hard wood when developed by a proper finish. This, however, cannot be done without filling the softer or porous parts with a hard, transparent substance, and at the same time giving a smooth polish to the compact solid, so that when the varnish is applied it cannot strike into the wood and change its colour. The varnish should merely lie smoothly upon the surface, giving brilliancy and effect to the natural beauty of colour and endless variety of grain. Not long since, Mr. Nathaniel Wheeler, of the Wheeler & Wilson Sewing Machine Co., patented a wood filler, which, from the testimony of those who have used it, is one of the best articles for the purpose yet produced.

According to the best authorities the old practice of oiling the wood is altogether wrong and should be entirely abandoned. Any one at all skilled in the art of wood-finishing will see, upon a moment's reflection, that a coat of oil applied directly to the wood has the effect of swelling the fibres, and retaining them in that condition until the oil becomes entirely dry or disappears. During all this time the fibres are gradually shrinking, and consequently moving and checking the varnish. Oil also "burns" the wood, and in time gives it a dark, disagreeable colour, quite obliterating the lighter shades and destroying the contrast which is the most important element of its beauty.

The use of scraping varnish for polished work, although long practised for the want of something better, is not only slow and expensive, but otherwise objectionable.

The application of several coats of poor resin varnish, as a foundation for durable work, is inconsistent. A little reflection should satisfy any one that such a filler cannot possibly be as good as one composed of a hard, tough substance, which thoroughly unites with the fibres of the wood.

*The Furniture Gazette.*